



# EQUITY IN THE NEEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

December 21, 2020 presentation for NUARI



**STUDENTS TELLING THEIR STORY TO ALL STAFF  
at Back To School Meeting  
(August 2019)**

## **REAL COALITION:**

### **Race, Equity, Access, Leadership**

**THE REAL COALITION PROVIDES LEADERSHIP  
AND GUIDANCE ON ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO  
RACIAL EQUITY AND SUPPORTING THE  
ADVANCEMENT OF ALL LEARNERS IN THE  
NEEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS.**

**WE ARE COMMITTED TO ENGAGING STAFF,  
STUDENTS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITY  
MEMBERS IN CONVERSATIONS AND ACTIONS  
THAT PROMOTE EQUITABLE PRACTICES FOR  
ALL IN OUR COMMUNITY.**

- REAL Coalition held its first meeting in October 2018
- **Includes district leaders, school leaders, teachers, parents, community members, students**
- Three-tiered system: larger Coalition, Steering Committee, and sub-committees supporting six goal areas:
  1. Policies and Practices in support of equity
  2. Curriculum & Instruction in support of equity
  3. Professional Learning in support of equity
  4. Hiring and Employment practices in support of equity
  5. Culture and Climate in support of equity
  6. Communications and Community Engagement

## Highlighting a few REAL Accomplishments SY 2019 and 2020:

- [Protocol for Addressing an Act of Bias or Hate](#) in the Needham Public Schools
- Elementary Racial Literacy Task Force
- Elementary Parent Groups (“In My Shoes”)
- Middle School Social Justice League & Launching Scholars Program
- High School Castle Scholars Program
- RESTORATIVE PRACTICES at NHS
- SAFE: Students Advocating for Equity
- Culturally Responsive Teaching & Learning, aka *Know Yourself, Know Your Students, Know Your Practice*: framework that all educators use to embed equity into our daily practice; includes list of culturally responsive competencies, reflective questions that promote personal growth, tools and resources for immediate use
- Increasing the number of staff of color being hired year over year
- Portrait of A Needham Graduate: 5-year Strategic Plan with shared vision of the future for ALL students

## Highlighting a few recent REAL Accomplishments:

- ***Courageous Conversations on Race*** - ongoing full-year NHS course where juniors & seniors apply what they learn about how racism operates on a systemic level, both in society and in our schools; design and deliver workshops to 9<sup>th</sup> graders; model the importance of being an upstander; demonstrate to their peers the different strategies to use when they recognize a racist remark or action
- **All Staff Professional Development Day** on November 25, *Moving Towards Inclusive Excellence* - with Monique Vogelsang, Equity Consultant and Lead Developer of Pollyanna Racial Literacy Curriculum & Dr. Gary Bailey, Equity Consultant
- [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Website](#) - resource for educators and the broader Needham Public Schools community; provides opportunities for continued learning, conversation, and taking action
- **Year 2 of Portrait Strategic Plan** - with goals to implement K-5 Racial Literacy Curriculum; align PreK-12 anti-racist instructional practices; anchor SEL to equity; incorporate culturally responsive teaching practices into instructional framework
- **Launch of Elementary Racial Literacy Curriculum** - *see video on next slide*



The Needham Channel report...

## Elementary School Racial Literacy Curriculum

The image shows a YouTube video player interface. The video title is "Elementary School Racial Literacy Curriculum". The video thumbnail features the text "ELEMENTARY RACIAL LITERACY CURRICULUM" in large, bold, black letters on an orange background. The video is currently playing at 0:35 / 6:52. The video content shows three women in a video call. The woman in the top right is wearing glasses and a blue turtleneck. The woman in the bottom left is wearing a floral patterned top. The woman in the bottom right is wearing glasses and a grey patterned top. The video player includes a progress bar, a play button, a volume icon, a settings icon, and a full screen icon. The YouTube logo is visible in the bottom right corner.

Elementary School Racial Literacy Curriculum

**ELEMENTARY  
RACIAL LITERACY  
CURRICULUM**

MORE VIDEOS

0:35 / 6:52

YouTube


## Highlighting a few Communications from the past year:

May 2020 [posting from the district's Senior Leadership Team](#) addressing the news about national protests and riots and the steps Needham Public Schools can take to demonstrate to the community, our families, and our students that we care, and we have an obligation as educators and human beings to address injustice, ignorance, and racism.

June 2020 [interview with WBUR](#) on how protests are being addressed with students. Superintendents of METCO districts joined together to call for unity against racial discrimination in schools.

August 2020 AASA School Administrator magazine article entitled [No, I Am Not Color Blind](#): how Needham Public Schools strives to be inclusive and free of bias, but we are a reflection of a broader society in which inequality and bias exist, and that is particularly true for students of color. Our students and staff of color experience the sting and pain of racism routinely, and educators must acknowledge this.





**Needham**  
Public Schools

Scholarship - Citizenship - Community - Personal Growth

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### Equity

REAL Coalition

Equity Updates to School Committee

Policies and Practices In Support of Equity

Curriculum & Instruction In Support of Equity

Professional Learning In Support of Equity

Hiring & Employment Practices In Support of Equity

Culture & Climate In Support of Equity

Communications & Community Engagement

What It Means to be a METCO District

School Highlights: Equity Work Across the District


Equity Audit Report - March 2018

Equity Audit Initial Findings - Dec 2017

### Equity

*Needham Public Schools / Equity*

The district's working definition of equity, proposed by our Superintendent as a starting point for our work, is the basis for the development of curriculum and assessments, the design of learning activities, the purchase of books and materials, hiring staff, the facilitation of meetings, and just generally going about the business of school. Equity is in the forefront, and staff take action based on its intent and meaning as we continue to make progress toward this district priority. (See Superintendent's Blog *Back to School: It's All About Equity* and for the student perspective on equity, see Needham School Spotlight *video featuring leaders of Students Advocating for Equity (SAFE)*.)



Equity: Fair and just access, inclusion, and participation; the practice of nurturing a learning environment in which all children are empowered to grow, create, and achieve; freedom from bias and discrimination; an understanding that each child possesses personal gifts and attributes and brings these to the classroom which strengthen learning for all; a process by which we promote justice, engender respect, and inspire hope.

There is no place for bigotry, racism, homophobia, or hate in the classrooms of the Needham Public Schools. All students and staff, regardless of race, color, sex, homeless status, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, ability, socioeconomic status, or immigration status, have dignity and are valued and contributing members of our learning community.

Daniel E. Gutekanst  
Superintendent of Schools

**REAL COALITION** members:

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Greg Bayse  
Mitchell Principal

Steve Plasko  
High School History & Social Sciences Department Chair

Andrea Vargas  
Newman Assistant Principal

Jamie Singelais  
ELL Coordinator

George Goneconto  
Hillside Teacher

Joanne Allen-Willoughby  
METCO Director

Leslie Smart  
Middle School METCO Coordinator

Tom Denton  
Guidance Director

Diane Simmons  
Director, Strategic Planning and Community Engagement

# PLEASE VISIT *public website* dedicated to Equity work in the Needham Public Schools

[www.needham.k12.ma.us/equity](http://www.needham.k12.ma.us/equity)

Links to articles, podcasts, books, and studies curated for Needham Public Schools staff and families. This resources page for Equity information is updated on an ongoing basis in response to global and local events that impact the lives of our community.

## Highlighting Student Voices

